

BOOKS.

"En hoekens ende boekens."

It is late in the day to say a word about Count Tolstoi's "Childhood, Boyhood, Youth" (Walter Scott, 24, Warwick Lane), but we will venture to do so, seeing that our point of view is not that of the general critic. There is possibly no known field of research in which so little available work has been done as in that of child-nature. The "fair lande" lies under our very eyes, but whoso would map it out must write "Unexplored" across vast tracts. Thoughtful persons begin to suspect that the mistakes we make through this ignorance are grievous and injurious. For example, are not all our schemes of education founded on the presumption that a child's mind—his "thinking, feeling man"—begins "very small," and grows great with the growth of his body? We cannot tell if this is indeed the case. The children keep themselves to themselves in a general way, their winning ways and frank confidences notwithstanding; but if one of us does, by chance, get a child revealed to him, he is startled to find that the child has by far the keener intelligence, the wiser thoughts, the larger soul of the two. When genius is able to lift the veil and show us a child, it does a service which, in our present state of thought, we are hardly able to appraise; and when genius or simplicity, or both, shall have given us enough such studies to generalise upon, we shall doubtless reconsider the whole subject, and shall be dismayed at the slights we have been putting upon the children in the name of education. Count Tolstoi gives us here unmistakable child-portraiture, miniatures in which a mother may see her child and recognise what and how much there is in him.

"Like our own dear mother," the little fellow writes, in the verses he makes for his grandmother's birthday; and then when the verses come to be read, ah! the humiliation of soul he goes through, and how surely he expects father and grandmother to find him out for a hypocrite. "Why did I write it? She's not here, and it was not necessary to mention her; I love grandma, it's true; I reverence her, but still she is not the same. Why did I write it? Why have I lied?" This is the sort of thing there is in children. We recognise it as we read, and remember the dim, childish days when we, too, had an "organ of truth" just so exquisitely delicate; and the recollection should quicken our reverence for the tender consciences of children.

NOTES AND QUERIES.

Being deeply interested in the good work of the P.N.E.U., I heartily welcome the promised "House of Education," in relation to which I desire to say a few words. Probably I am not wrong in the conclusion that its details are still in an embryonic stage, but I read in this month's *Review* that "one of its functions is the training of *nurses*." May I suggest that of even more weighty importance is the training of "mothers"?

Let me explain my meaning clearly. There may be, doubtless there are, at the present moment scores of conscientious women who, noting a grievous deficiency in the moral qualities of those to whom the guardianship of children is entrusted, are moved to make for progress in the ranks of nurses and teachers. For these any training school raising the standard of such employées will be an inestimable boon. But for these scores of earnest "seekers after light" there are hundreds of other women, present and future mothers, whose lamentable frivolity and blindness to responsibility permit them to bestow less care and attention upon the choice of a nurse or a governess than they habitually give to that of a dress or a trinket. Again, there are many higher-natured girls who fail in the fulfilment of their duties simply from lack of opportunity to learn what (even under better arrangements for efficient nurses) it will remain their primary province, as mothers, to comprehend and supervise. That the conscientious nurse is a *rara avis* is undeniable; is the conscientious mother less exceptional? I fear not; this same and all-important quality of conscientiousness having been, unfortunately, eliminated from our code of instruction in the last half-century. The course of education, to-day prolonged into womanhood, and too often forming only the prelude to a public career, has left no leisure for the practice of domestic duties. All knowledge of the needs and training of children, all experience of management that tends to home comfort (knowledge that cannot be gained by theory) is necessarily wanting when the recognised highest ambition of young womanhood is a public out-of-door career. The deplorable results are—ignorant mothers and housewives, incapable nurses, slatternly neglected homes. What can be the future of generations whose parents do not even possess a "tradition" of the duties and responsibilities they alone could and should impart?

This being the evil, shall we not endeavour to find a remedy? Fashion, which has been so actively working against us, may doubtless be won over to our side now that the sense of our thinkers has discovered a kindred